

## Esmeralda, the Amazing War Worker



NINA WILCOX PUTNAM and Norman Jacobsen have collaborated in a thoroughly delightful war comedy, *Esmeralda; or Every Little Bit Helps*, which has not suffered one whit by the fact of the armistice. It concerns Esmeralda Sprunt, who came fresh and boisterous from the West at her aunt Sarah De Wynt's invitation to share in war work. She brought nothing but trouble from the first awful evening when she advanced upon the glittering drawing room of the De Wynt home, dressed in outrageous corduroy skirt, cowboy shoes and (oh, horror!) a bandanna, followed by a common beast, half coyote and half dog, and then she made things worse by mistaking the 1,000 Pekingese for a cat!

Esmeralda couldn't understand why people who professed to be doing their bit should keep so many butlers, coachmen and chauffeurs and be so un-Hooverish as to eating. Although there were numberless other things she failed to understand, this was one that she could remedy and it didn't make Aunt Sarah any more friendly to lose a trusted

man servant every few days, prodded into enlisting by the ingratiating breeziness of her abandoned niece. That a young girl could desire to go on with just her atrocious clothes and give the money for new ones to the Red Cross was inconceivable to Aunt Sarah and yet she got no more thanks for her offer of them than, "Very well, Aunt Sarah, but I think the girls would be much better employed making munitions to cover the front than dresses to uncover my back!" So vulgar and pointless!

Altogether she was a most annoying girl, quite capable of enormous social breaches like riding in the front seat of the limousine, talking to the chauffeur and then waving him goodbye as she sprang unassisted from the car, nor did she cavil at ordering ham and eggs as an evening repast. The more intolerable Esmeralda became the greater grew her power over men. Capt. Tugwell in particular, who was intended by Aunt Sarah for her silvery voiced and properly artificial niece Marjorie (Lord Castlewing's cousin, you know, over here to purchase supplies for the British Government).

It is an amazingly successful little story and can well stand rereading by those who chance to have read it when it appeared serially last winter. Cleverly con-

ceived and carried out and embellished by May Wilson Preston's illustrations, the result is enviable.

ESMERALDA; OR EVERY LITTLE BIT HELPS. BY NINA WILCOX PUTNAM and NORMAN JACOBSEN. J. B. Lippincott Company. \$1.

## "Twenty-three and a Half Hours' Leave"

MARY ROBERTS RINEHART has a joyous Americanism about her work nowhere more manifest than in her new novelette, or very long short story, *Twenty-three and a Half Hours' Leave*. This amusing piece of fiction, which appeared in the *Saturday Evening Post*, is now published as one of George H. Doran's "little books" and would make a capital gift for any young soldier or relative of a soldier. But it is the man in the camp who would be best prepared to appreciate the humor of the story.

The plot of this war yarn is farcical and too neatly constructed. It has the trite motif of an absurd wager won in a sensational way. The plot is entertaining, but not convincing, but the characters and the conditions of camp life are extremely realistic. Sergeant Gray, "all-American athlete and prime young devil of the Headquarters Troop," is an engaging and credible young person whose oscillations into and out of trouble keep the reader chuckling. The stable sergeant, likewise, is real. "He had been made stable sergeant because he had been a motorcycle racer. By the same process of careful selection the chief mechanic had once kept a livery stable."

Army regulations that require the immediate destruction of new uniforms which are slightly defective will seem extraordinary to the unmilitary mind; but they provide stirring complications for the action of the story. There is the indispensable pretty girl here, too, of course, and the irascible general, her uncle. A humorous study of camp life and of the American youth well worth an hour.

TWENTY-THREE AND A HALF HOURS' LEAVE. BY MARY ROBERTS RINEHART. George H. Doran Company. 60 cents.

## Joe Lincoln's Cape Cod Folks

By EDWARD N. TEALL.

THERE will be many opinions about Joe Lincoln's latest, "Shavings." Some folks will think "Shavings," Jed Winslow, a wooden character, and others will find him a delightful eccentric, one of those homely philosophers created for the confounding of arrogant and pretentious fakers. City folks may call it "small town stuff" and proceed to love it or hate it according as they are friends or foes of that kind of literature. Highbrows are likely to scorn it for its sentiment and its unapologetic romanticism, and sentimental folks may find it hard to forgive the pretty young widow for not marrying Jed, the maker of windmills and author of quaint sayings. Mr. Lincoln is here at his old tricks. That they are good ones they have proved in every test. Jed and his Orhamite friends and unfriends are true Lincoln Cape Codders. There are the customary village rivalries and the usual complications in the small

affairs of these unaffectedly attractive people. The problems are not very deep, but they are important to the persons of the story, and of course the people are real enough to make us want to see their troubles all happily adjusted.

But are we wrong in thinking that this tale came hard? Its mechanics seem to show through. The book has 382 pages, but not more than about 225 pages of story. Jed Winslow says and does a good many things that seem devised to fill space. Some folks who admire his greatheartedness and his true wisdom will not easily forgive him his puns.

This is not quite the best of its author's books through which to begin an acquaintance with the whole splendid list, and that is as far as unfavorable comment ought to be carried. It has the tang of the Cape Cod breeze and the Cap Cod character. It has no deep complication of plot, no mysteries, no horrors, no particularly "tense" situations. But it has two love affairs and some conflict of wills, and just a taste of the ever pleasant flavor of a villain's confounding. The big part of the story comes toward the end, and just good enough to make it worth while to overlook some real weaknesses in the preceding chapters. Jed Winslow fell in love with the moon and was inclined to howl because he could not have it; but, like the wise old dog that he was, he buried his hopes quietly and deeply when they died and found comfort in the fact that if he could not have the moon he could at least have the pleasure of looking at it.

"SHAVINGS." BY JOSEPH G. LINCOLN. D. Appleton & Co. \$1.50.

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